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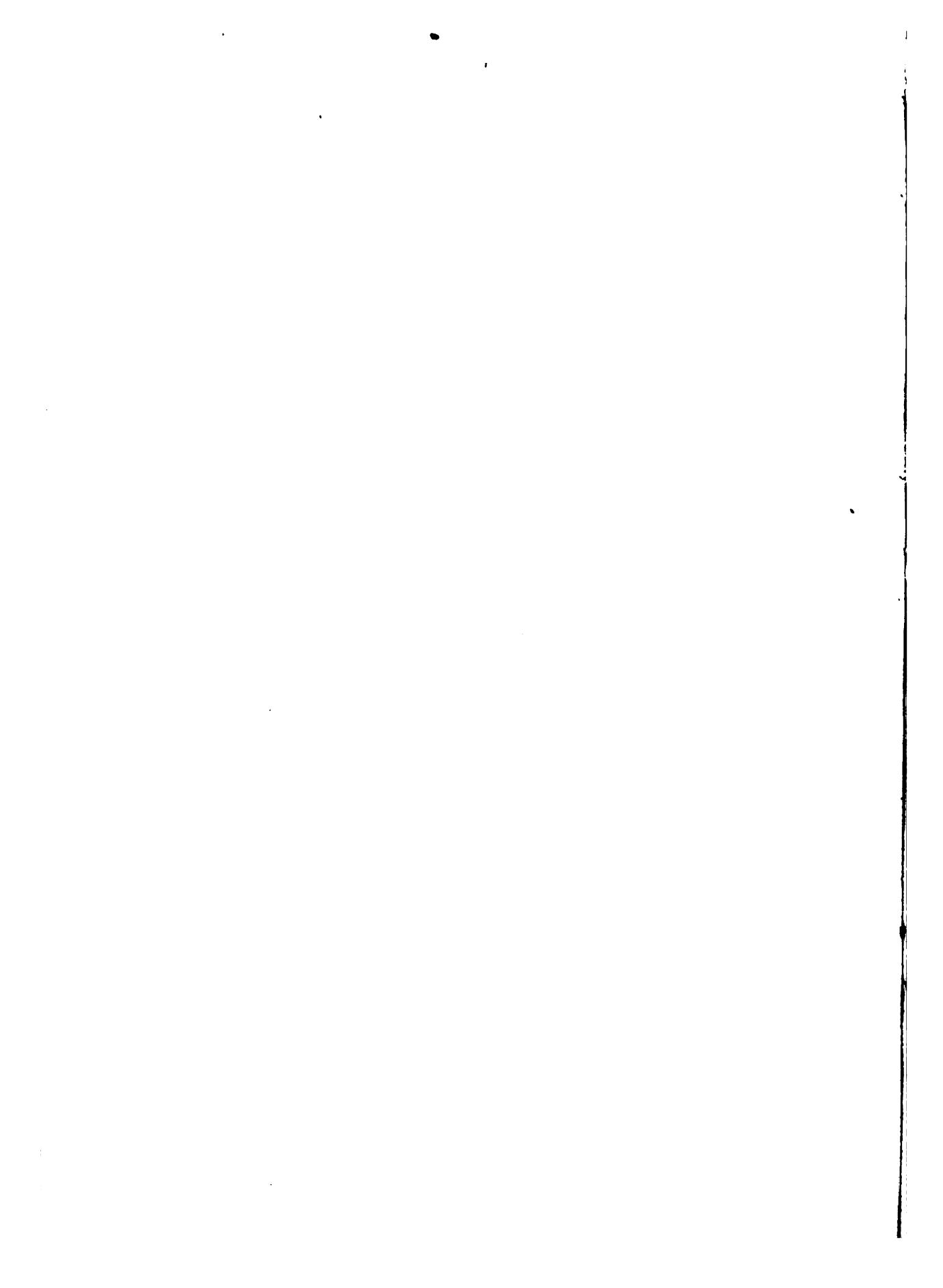
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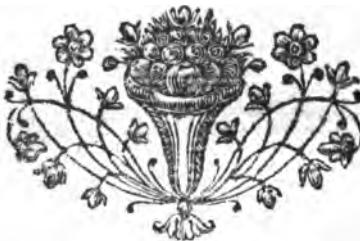
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A N
E P I S T L E
T O
F L O R I O,
A T
O X F O R D.

— *Si quid mea Carmina possunt.*

Virgil.



L O N D O N:

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A N
E P I S T L E
T O
Florio, at Oxford.

TIS true, my Friend, what busy Fame has told,
My *Oxford* Tenets I no longer hold :
Broke from the slavish Bond of lineal Right,
I bow to Liberty's cœlest Light.
But yet, though chang'd, I seek by different Schemes
My Country's Good, and scorn our former Dreams :
To Thee and Friendship I am still the same,
And bright as ever burns the sacred Flame.

Bad

Bad is the Cause, which *Florio* can't defend ;
 The Reas'ning weak, which can't convince a Friend.
 What is this Shame of Change, you bid me fear ?
 Is it the Knave's Reproach, or Coxcomb's Sneer,
 Or Lies, which Malice will repeat in vain,
 A Fear of Danger, and a Hope of Gain ?
 Such Hopes and Fears, mean Motives ! I disclame,
 And, conscious of no Guilt, can feel no Shame.

Too long these empty Phantoms have supprest
 Truth's sacred Dictates rising in my Breast ;
 When ev'n amidst our Joys, and wet with Wine,
 I felt the Glimm'ring of her Ray divine :
 Such as on *Thames*'s Banks, in *Eton*'s Shade,
 We both once heard the Heav'n-instructed Maid ;
 Pleas'd at her Call through Learning's Maze to stray,
 Where *Hallifax* and *Sandwich* led the Way ;

Now

Now dropt the tender Tear on *Brutus'* Herse,
 Now rais'd to *George* and Liberty the Verse.

The sad, the truly shameful Change you know,
 When first we bow'd to Freedom's exil'd Foe ;
 Led by false Teachers, by ourselves betray'd,
 By fancy'd Right, and weak Compassion sway'd,
 For oft' exploded Lies we quitted Truth,
 For Faction's guilty Cares the Joys of Youth.
 Say if thy conscious Mind unmov'd recalls
 Our Noonday Riots, and our Midnight Brawls ;
 How thy chaste Lips with foulest Slanders rung,
 How Treafon thunder'd from thy tuneful Tongue.
 Inflam'd with Party Rage, and hot with Wine,
 What Ties restrain'd us, social or divine ?
 When did we spare to brand the spotless Name,
 The Statesman's Virtue, or the Warrior's Fame ;

Infult

Insult those Laws, which screen'd us from our Fate,
And curse the Godlike Father of our State?

Here would I stop---for sure thy gentle Heart;
Repentant owns the vile unworthy Part:
But Truth and Friendship urge me to proceed,
And wound thy Memory with thy blackest Deed.
Alas! what Madness then my Soul possest,
What wild obdurate Phrenzy steel'd thy Breast,
When, in the Face of Heav'n's offended Pow'r,
By Him, by every Hope of Joy we swore,
What?--to support the Throne, we wish'd to shake,
And guard the Government, we strove to break.—
What then, what check'd the Thund'rer's vengeful
Hand,
His Pow'r despis'd; his Deity profan'd;
While thus to Treason Perjury we join'd,
And prostituted God to cheat Mankind?

In

In vain you plead, with Guilt's evasive Art,
" A different Language of the Tongue and Heart:"
Or in a gayer Mood, and smiling, cry,
" Our learned Doctors swear, and why not I?"
Shall *Isis* teach, in this enlighten'd Age,
A Fraud exploded by a Heathen Stage?
Shall Right and Wrong change with a Pedant's Whim,
Or reverend Sinners sanctify a Crime?
Tho' they, perhaps, pursue a safer Road,
And hold Sin lawful in the Cause of God:
Inspir'd by Romish Zeal, th'Apostate Train
Can taste no Joy till *Rome*'s weak Bigot reign:
Mitres and Lawns their priestly Passions raise,
While the good Pontiff feeds the pious Blaze;
To each blind *Swiss* his blank Commissions gives,
And sanctifies at once their past and future Lives.

Such are, perhaps, thy Guides; but O! beware;
 Small are thy Merits from the Papal Chair:
 Tho' factious Priests are sav'd by Mother Church,
 They leave th' unholy Layman in the Lurch.

What various Ill from blind Obedience springs,
 Th' unwarrantable Claim of Popes and Kings!
 'Tis this that checks the Soul's aspiring Aim,
 Unerves her Strength, and damps her heav'nly Flame;
 'Tis this supports triumphant Falshood's Reign,
 While Truth subjected feels her galling Chain;
 'Twas this, my Friend, (or say what other Pow'r
 Subdu'd our Minds in that ill omen'd Hour).
 This taught us first, with reverential Dread,
 To ask no Proof of what the Master said;
 His motley Systems blindly to receive,
 Unquestion'd hear, and unconvinc'd believe

All

All that before, in *Filmer's* hellish Page,
 To Slav'ry bent a loose degenerate Age ;
 Or what, from sacred Store of ancient Tales,
 Mysterious *Carte* in weekly Sheets retails ;
 Proves both the Druid and the King divine,
 And hymns the Wonders of the fav'rite Line,
 Where Heav'n's own Seal attests th'authentic Grant,
 Which join'd in one the Monarch and the Saint.
 Then grieve not, *Charles*, thy fruitless Labours crost ;
 A safe unshaken Throne you still may boast :
 To *Brunswick* leave a rescu'd Nation's Care ;
 Do thou with pious Craft, and Monkish Pray'r,
 Thy healing Virtues to the World make known,
 And for an earthly seek a heav'nly Crown.
 Thy *Rome* with Joy shall ope the blest Abodes,
 And add one *Stuart* to her Thousand Gods :
 Thy *Oxford* too shall rear the sancted Shrine,
 And ev'n the Martyr's Tomb be less rever'd than thine.

Still do I see the hoary Plaid-girt Seer,
(A Crowd surrounding with attentive Ear)
Unfold how Monarchy from Heav'n began,
Who made a King when first he made a Man :
A King compell'd a numerous Race to rear,
Of Sons enslav'd to one predestin'd Heir ;
That happy One to Pow'r Imperial born,
The rest to Slavery, Poverty, and Scorn !
From hence we trace the List of Royal Names,
From haughty *Nimrod* down to exil'd *James* :
From hence the Right inherent we derive,
Which Birth bestows, but Virtue ne'er can give ;
Th' exclusive Right to those choice Souls confin'd,
By God appointed Sovereigns of their Kind.
Theirs is --- the Race of Man to save, or slay :
— Ye Sons of Freedom tremble and obey :

So

So large the Power, so undeferv'dly giv'n,
 Who but must own them Favourites of Heav'n :

While such-like Systems all our Souls engage,
 Scorn'd are the Studies of our happier Age :
 No more we hear immortal *Homer's* Song,
 Or Tyrants foil'd by *Tully's* pow'rful Tongue ;
 No more we glow with all that *Cato* thought,
 That Freedom dictated, and *Lucan* wrote :
 Whate'er old *Greece* to virtuous Actions fir'd,
 Whate'er the glorious Sons of *Rome* inspir'd,
 Delights no more : The visionary Schemes
 Of Monks, succeed to *Plato's* golden Dreams ;
 Dull, cloyster'd Drones, with Minds untaught to prove
 The Hero's Rapture, or the Patriot's Love ;
 Prompt to deform their wise Creator's Plan,
 And sell the first best Gift of God to Man !

By

By These convinc'd that Nature meant us Slaves,
 No more our Breast with public Spirit heaves ;
 Restless we burn to feel our fated Woes,
 And join the mongrel Schemes of Freedom's Foes ;
 By passive Doctrines to Rebellion driv'n,
 And taught by Perjury to merit Heav'n !

Tho' oft' to win the brave unwary Heart,
 Foul Faction knows to play the Patriot's Part :
 'Tis thus *Mezenius*, haughty, bold, and loud,
 With Stoic Raptures awes th'admiring Crowd :
 Virtue and *Britain* are his pompous Themes --
 Revenge, just *Jove*, the violated Names !
 What ? was it Virtue arm'd thy daring Hand,
 To deal rebellious Slander through the Land ?
 Was it thy boasted Zeal for *Britain's* Cause,
 Revil'd her Monarch, and despis'd her Laws ,

In

In tender Minds perverted growing Truth,
 And fill'd her Prisons with corrupted Youth?
 If such thy Merit, who can grudge thy Praise?
 Go on, vain Man, thy empty Trophies raise;
 Still in a School-boy's Labours waste thy Age;
 In fulsome Flattery, or in pointless Rage,
 Still talk of Virtue, which you never knew;
 Still Slander all to Her, and Freedom true.---
 Though crowded Theatres with Ios shook,
 And shouting Faction hail'd her Heroe's Joke,
 Who but must scorn Applause, which K--- receives?
 Who but must laugh at Praise, which *Oxford* gives?

Ungrateful *Oxford*! was it then in vain,
 When griev'd you sunk beneath a Tyrant's Chain,
 In vain did *Nassau* use his Patriot Cares,
 Redress thy Wrongs, and banish all thy Fears?

Still

Still dost thou wayward court this hateful Race,
 Foes to thy Rights, and to thy Country's Peace?
 Still dost thou thwart a grateful People's Choice,
 And damp by factious Feuds the public Joys?
 While *George*'s Title by each Foe's contest,
 And haughty *France* deserts her vagrant Guest;
 Sends him to strut an empty *Polish* Lord,
 Or for the Crosier change perhaps the Sword;
 While Peace o'er *Europe*'s utmost Confines reigns,
 And sheds her choicest Gifts on *Albion*'s Plains;
 While to remotest Ports our Sails we send,
 Secure to meet in every Port a Friend;
 Rever'd abroad, at home rich, happy, free,
 Shall *England* find her only Foe in Thee?
 Forbid it Heav'n! O cease the impious War!
 If not to Reason, listen to Despair;
 Tempt not thy injur'd Country's Rage alone,
 But own the Monarch, *Jove* and *Britain* own.

Thy

Thy Sister, see! her brighter Glories raise,
 And court by worthiest Arts her Sov'reign's Praise :
 'Tis her's the generous Ardour to impart,
 Which guides to noblest Aims the human Heart ;
 Each Grace of social Virtue to inspire,
 And fill the *British* Youth with *Roman* Fire.
 Her Sons exult beneath her soft'ring Wings,
 And here a *Whitehead*, there a *Mason* sings ;
 While thine --- (may Fame the hateful Truth conceal,
 And black Oblivion 'whelm the guilty Tale !)
 Thy slavish Race no Charms of Virtue move,
 Estrang'd by poisonous Arts from Freedom's Love :
 Lost to their God, their Country, and their King,
 To Science lost,--- their Joys from Riot spring :
 O'er the full Bowl their factious Zeal they boast,
 Slander their Wit, and Slavery their Toast :

C

To

To their wild Shouts thy Tow'r's responsive roar ;

The Graces droop, the Muses quit the Shore.

What Grace the Sons of Treason can adorn ?

What Muse but flies the slavish Breast with Scorn ?

But Thou, to whom belong these artless Lays,

Thou dear Companion of my earliest Days,

O view with friendly Eye thy once-lov'd Youth,

Fir'd in the Cause of Liberty and Truth !

If, nobly warm'd by Freedom's native Zeal,

From Faction's odious Face He tears the Veil ;

If the rough Verse too harsh Resentment shows,

O think what Ardour in his Bosom glows !

Think to what glorious Point his Labours tend,

The Welfare of his Country and his Friend !

For Her, for Thoe, my Breast alternate feels,
While searching Thought each future Woe reveals ;

Now

[19]

Now sees thee pensive in the gloomy Cell,
 Where black Despair, and broken Faction dwell ;
 Now by misguided Zeal incens'd to War
 Against thy Country shake thy Rebel Spear :
 Ever to *Britain* useles, or abhor'd,
 Thy Ease inglorious, and accurs'd thy Sword :
 Sad State of Freedom's Foes ! --- But turn thine Eyes,
 And see in virtuous Pomp her Heroes rise !
 See *Locke* for Her unfold his sacred Page !
 See *Hampden* stem a Monarch's lawles Rage !
 See gallant *Sidney* bleeding in her Cause !
 See every fearless Champion of her Laws,
 Whom *Albion*'s latest Annals shall record,
 Guarding her Peace, or brandishing her Sword !
 Whoe'er their Country's sacred Rights upheld,
 Undaunted in the Senate, or the Field ;
 Each Care, each Toil for Liberty sustain'd,
 By *William* rescu'd, and by *George* maintain'd !

Fir'd by the glorious Scene, awake, my Friend,
Let thy long Dream of guilty Error end ;
O fly yon Walls, where learned Folly reigns,
Where Vice and Faction lead their thoughtless Trains !
To thy own Shades, to —— Groves repair ;
The Muse attendant shall await Thee there :
There, while no Prejudice our Reason blinds,
No Wine beguiles, no rev'renc'd Teacher binds ;
While no rude Clamors rend the peaceful Skies,
Silent we'll hear our Parent Nature's Voice ;
With pious Awe explore her beauteous Plan,
But chief, our own, our proper Province, Man :
Impartial seek whence Law and Order came ;
What secret Ties cement the social Frame ;
Whence Kings derive their delegated Sway ;
What taught the pow'rful Many to obey ;

The

The Force of One, or Interest of All ;
 The sov'reign Will of Heav'n, or Reason's Call.

Let savage *India* view with wond'ring Eyes
 Her mortal Gods, the Children of the Skies ;
 Let artful Priests repeat the slavish Tale,
 Or in the *Gallic*, or *Campanian* Vale :
 Not so our hardy Sires to Empire bow'd,
 Reason their Guide, their End the *public Good* :
 For *this* the Man in Arms, or Arts renown'd,
 Grateful they honour'd, and for *this* they crown'd ;
 On One the Burthen of the Whole was laid,
 And for Protection giv'n-Allegiance paid :
 For *this* great End (his Course of Virtue run,
 When the good Monarch left the vacant Throne)
 That jarring Pride, and civil Strife might cease,
 They bade the Son should fill the Father's Place,
 Nor dreamt of Right inherent in the Race. }



No

No Priest as yet the flatt'ring Tale had coin'd,
 That Heav'n the Many for the Few design'd ;
 Nor sigh'd their Kings, by wild Ambition led,
 To barter filial Love for slavish Dread.

Ah ! how unlike the future Sons of Pow'r,
 Intent the Hand that rais'd them to devour ;
 While, lost all Thought of mutual Ties, the Throne
 Is fill'd by vast Prerogative alone !

Like *Homer's* Discord see the Monster rise,
 Sprung from the Earth, yet soaring to the Skies !

Her to reprefs, and break a Nation's Chains,
 Our gallant Fathers rose : On bloody Plains
 Oft their confed'rate Banners they display'd,
 And shook their Tyrant on his Throne with Dread.

Genius of *Britain* ! oft hast thou beheld
 Thy Warriors toiling in the well-fought Field ;
 Oft has fair Liberty fulfill'd their Vows,
 And twin'd her Laurel round their conqu'ring Brows.

Illustrious Chiefs by whose successful Sword
Britannia bends beneath no private Lord ;
 Fix'd by whose Arms th' eternal Barriers stand,
 And equal Empire rules the happy Land ;
 Her People free, her Monarch truly great,
 Proud to be stil'd First Subject of her State.

To guard that State by Birth and Fortune chose,
 No more let *Florio* rank among her Foes ;
 Born for the Good of *Britain* and Mankind,
 To that great Task, O ! turn thy generous Mind ;
 To that great Task the Country of thy Sires
 Thee loudly calls ; O ! hear her just Desires ;
 In *Albion's* Councils take the proffer'd Share,
 Nor shun the glorious Weight of public Care :
 There let Her see thee, faithful to her Cause,
 From Faction's Insults vindicate her Laws ;

Let

Let Her with transport see each fav'rite Son
 Of former Ages by thy Praise outdone ;
 While, ever mindful of her sacred Trust,
 True to thy King, and to thy Country just,
 The Rights of both you guard with steady Heart,
 And to the Statesman's join the Patriot's Part.
 Then shall thy Friend (nor thou refuse his Claim)
 With humble Pride partake thy growing Fame ;
 Happy, that not in loose inglorious Strains,
 He sung of cruel Nymphs, or love-sick Swains ;
 But, early taught the gen'rous Warmth to feel ;
 Pour'd forth his honest Song for *England's* Weal ;
 Set tainted Youth from slavish Error free,
 And gave to *Britain* such a Son as Thee.

F. I. N. I. S.

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